

**ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 33****HARPER'S
SEPTEMBER 1984**

SHOULD THE U FIGHT SECRET WA

Almost from the moment the first "contra" was issued his Arm made combat boots, the Reagan Administ secret war against Nicaragua has been embroi vociferous if somewhat bizarre public debate gressmen proclaim their outrage, editorialists their misgivings, while officials in Washington are running the war—blandly "decline to co on intelligence matters."

Secret, or covert, wars are an honored trad postwar U.S. foreign policy, having enjoyed thing of a golden age in the 1950s, when th discreetly shuffled governments in Iran, Guat and the Philippines. But the "controversial secret war" is a paradox peculiar to our post-Vietnam, post-Watergate democracy. At the root of the furor over Nicaragua lies a conflict that has obsessed America's public life for the last fifteen-odd years: the people's right to know versus the stated demands of national security.

Can any democracy effectively fight secret wars? Should the United States fight such wars? If so, by what moral right and in what circumstances? To consider these dilemmas, *Harper's* recently brought together intelligence officers, politicians, and diplomats who have confronted them firsthand and found them no less easy to resolve.

Continued